

Agricultural Preservation Restriction Program Municipal Grants FY2006 Scoring

Section I: The purpose of the Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) program is to permanently protect the Commonwealth's most productive farmland, thereby enhancing the economic and environmental sustainability of Massachusetts's agriculture. Two types of funding eligibility are included in APR:

1. The APR Municipal Grant Program (APR-Muni) incorporates an initial screen for this priority funding of APR acquisitions that considers a town's agricultural resources and/or economic activity. If a town meets this initial eligibility threshold, then and only then will it be considered for priority allocation of state APR funds, based on the type of "agricultural smart growth" principles the town has adopted. In other words, this source of municipal APR funding is available only to towns that are passionate about agriculture from a planning perspective AND have enough agricultural activity to care about. At a minimum, APR-Muni targets APR funding to towns with an active agricultural sector. Taken to its fullest potential, this could help reinforce the economic development aspects of farmland protection.
2. APR projects that are not located in such priority communities may still be considered through the "traditional" APR program funds.

Section II: In addition to the standard review procedures of the APR program, municipalities applying to the APR Municipal Grant Program for priority funds must meet the following eligibility threshold qualifications:

1. The municipality has an agricultural land base that includes a minimum of 400 acres in active agricultural use, *and/ or 1200 acres enrolled in Chapters 61 and 61A combined*.
2. The project must meet minimum soils requirements: **A)** for projects less than 20 acres, 75% of the land in agricultural use must be classified as Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Soils of Statewide Importance, as defined and identified by USDA-NRCS. **B)** for projects greater than or equal to 20 acres, land in agricultural use must include 50% of the latter described soil types.
3. The proposed project: **A)** includes a 20% financial match, to be achieved through a town contribution, non-profit contribution, landowner bargain sale, documented increase in parcel value since Final Vote, in-kind contributions, or other acceptable means or a combination of these elements; **or B)** provides a lesser match but demonstrates a history of financial support for farmland protection activities to the satisfaction of the Commissioner of Agriculture and the Agricultural Lands Preservation Committee; **or C)** reflects a 5% reduction from the 20% match goal for each of action criteria items 6, 7 and 8 below.

[NOTE: In partnering with municipalities and landowners, MDAR has targeted a goal of 20% financial match per project that local contributing groups must invest. During fiscal year 2006, the Department is allowing temporary bridge measures for towns that show progress towards investing in their agricultural resources. These interim credits may not be applicable in future program years. Under option 3-B, a community's history of support for APR's is reviewed case by case and is expected to improve upon the past financial match commitments, eventually attaining the 20% match goal. Under Option 3-C a reduction can only be claimed after the

implementation of the listed action criteria. Any reduction by the municipality under Option 3-C cannot be below the municipality's historical contribution average of projects completed or final voted for the prior five years.]

Section III: Where threshold requirements #1 and #2 above cannot be met, APR-Muni will allow specific projects to be eligible if the project at least contains the financial match requirements above, **and** either:

4. is adding to an existing APR block of at least 200 acres; OR
5. is part of a defined farmland block, of which 75% of the block is permanently protected;

Section IV: Once a town (or project) has met the basic eligibility threshold through one of the above methods, actual funding priority would be further based on whether a town has demonstrated support for agriculture as both a business and as a resource, through the following action criteria:

6. established an agricultural commission or like entity **(4 points)**
7. enacted a town right-to-farm bylaw **(4 points)**
8. implemented a tracking system to prevent issuance of local permits for unauthorized construction on protected farmland **(4 points)**
9. promoted local and regional direct marketing opportunities, including but not limited to creating farmers' markets **(3 points)**
10. identified/inventoried farmland to be protected **(2 points)**
11. established a town farmland protection fund **(3 points)**
12. developed community agricultural events and/or promotions **(3 points)**
13. demonstrated support for farmland preservation by either exercising or assigning municipal right-of-first-refusal under Chapter 61A to non-profit land preservation organizations **(3 points)**
14. created an agricultural overlay district and developed site plan review on single-family house lots within such districts **(3 points)**
15. created buffer requirements on any non-farm development adjacent to agricultural lands **(3 points)**
16. implemented any program that redirects development to marginal, non-agricultural areas **(3 points)**
17. assisted in agricultural economic development, such as a TIF (tax incentive) for a business that supports local agriculture or assistance in locating and developing a value-added processing facility **(3 points)**
18. Worked with regional efforts to include active agriculture in regional land use planning **(2 points)**

NEW: A municipality may accumulate points by committing in writing to address any of the above actions within the coming year, receiving half the allotted points for such a commitment. In subsequent years, it is expected that only full points for implementation can be claimed.

Section V:

How to Calculate Combined Scoring Criteria:

Total point value possible of 40 points from FY06 APR-Muni, plus 30 points (after multiplier of 0.2143) from FY06 Commonwealth Capital Scorecard (CCF) and 30 points from FY06 APR & FRPP Worksheet (a document ranking eligibility for federal matching funds), equals possible 100 point total. **Example:** (APR-Muni Total Score of 26) + (CCF Total score of 89 x 0.2143 = 19) + (APR & FRPP Worksheet Total of 22) = 67 out of a possible 100 points.

Who Must Apply:

Communities that have an APR project(s) that has received or will be receiving a final vote approval by the Agricultural Lands Preservation Committee within Fiscal Year 2006.

Communities that applied in Fiscal Year 2005, but whose projects were not funded and closed by June 30, 2005, must re-apply for those project(s) to receive funding consideration in Fiscal-Year 2006.

When to Apply:

Communities should submit their APR-Muni applications **by October 31st**. After October 31st, project applications are considered on availability of funds, and those without current APR-Muni and Commonwealth Capital applications on file cannot be considered for priority funding.

How to Apply:

Communities need to fill-out an APR-Muni scorecard and provide a short summary statement for each criteria for which points are claimed. Explain how the community has implemented or is committing to implement a measure, and supply supporting documentation.

Note - Communities reapplying and not making any changes or additions to their previous APR-Muni application must minimally fill-out the current APR-Muni score sheet and have the form signed. Communities making new applications **or** submitting changes and additions to their previous application must provide supporting documentation.

Where to Submit:

The APR-Muni application, signatory page and supporting documentation is to be submitted to:

Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources, 251 Causeway Street, Suite 500, Boston, MA 02114, Attention APR Program.

For Information and to Obtain an Application:

Go to the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources web site at <http://www.mass.gov/agr/landuse/APR/index.htm>; or contact the Field Representative in your area:

Central - Michele Padula, 617-626-1758

Eastern - Christine Chisholm, 617-626-1751

Western, South - Barbara Hopson, 413-545-0179

Western, North - Rick Chandler, 413-577-0459